

# bmj.com news roundup

Full versions of these stories are available at: [bmj.com/content/vol324/issue7343/#NEWS\\_ROUNDUP](http://bmj.com/content/vol324/issue7343/#NEWS_ROUNDUP)

## Study adds to evidence that statins reduce risk of Alzheimer's disease

A study from the Boston University School of Medicine shows that taking statins—usually prescribed to lower cholesterol and to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes—was associated with a 79% reduction in the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 54th annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, the unpublished study confirms two previous studies that indicated a reduction in the risk of Alzheimer's disease, but this study is the largest of its kind in the United States and the first to include a large number of African Americans.

Dr Robert Green, the lead author, says his study "confirms and extends" these previous reports, in which cases and non-cases were classified in non-standardised fashion and the temporal relation between use of statins and onset of dementia was unclear. Neither of those studies reported the inclusion of African Americans, nor did they adjust for education of the participants or consider the impact of a genotype (apolipoprotein e4) that is associated with a greater risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

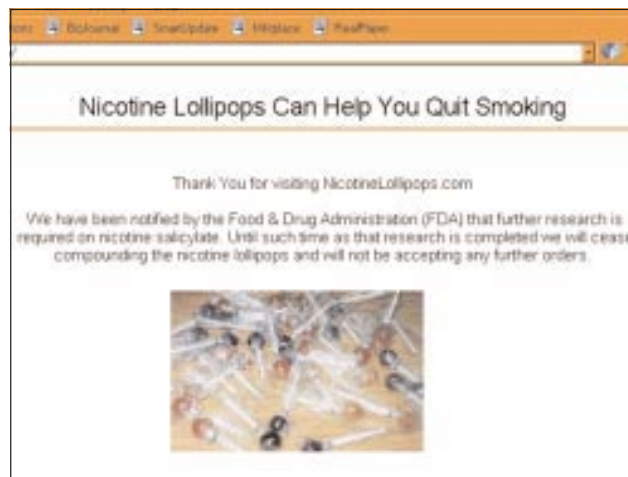
Dr Green and his co-workers conducted a case-control study of 2581 people from more than 800 families enrolled at 15 research centres from 1996 to 2001, including 614 African Americans.

David Spurgeon *Quebec*

## Consultants need flexibility in their careers

Hospital consultants need to be offered the flexibility to develop their career in line with their interests to prevent them from leaving the profession early, burning out, or getting bored, says a report out this week.

The report has called on the NHS, royal colleges, and facul-



## FDA halts sales of nicotine lollipops

The Food and Drug Administration last week sent "cease and desist" letters to three pharmacies ordering them to halt sales of lollipops containing nicotine.

Sold as smoking cessation products, the FDA said the lollipops were illegal because they use an untested form of nicotine called salicylate, a chemical that has not been approved by the FDA.

Nicorette gum, nicotine patches, and nasal sprays use a different form of nicotine called polacrilex, which is approved by the FDA. The former smoking cessation aids have also gone through testing by the agency to prove they are safe and effective.

The lollipops, which contain 2 mg or 4 mg of nicotine (cigarettes contain about 10 mg), sell for \$2 (£1.40; €2.30) to \$5 and come in different flavours, such as grape, watermelon, and tequila sunrise.

Doctors and health campaigners have expressed concerns that they may be bought and used by children because they look like ordinary lollipops. The FDA has previously said that smoking cessation products should not taste too good because they might be abused.

Annabel Ferriman *BMJ*

ties to provide careers advice for consultants, many of whom are dissatisfied with their workload, pressures, and increasing responsibilities.

With better career structure and possibilities of retraining, consultants will be able to avoid becoming overstressed or bored by taking breaks from clinical practice to concentrate on teaching, management, or medicolegal work instead. More flexibility to work part time and train in areas of interest and greater managerial, secretarial, and infrastructure support in clinical practice would all help to keep the consultant workforce happy.

In a foreword to the report, Professor George Alberti, the college's president, acknowledges that doctors no longer want to continue doing the same job continually for 30 years.

Zosia Kmietowicz *London*

*Careers for Consultant Physicians: Focus on Flexibility* is available from the RCP publications department on 020 7935 1174 (ext 358), price £10, or on the publications section of the website ([www.rcplondon.ac.uk](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk)).

## Eradication of polio threatened by \$275m funding shortfall

A funding gap of \$275m (£191m; €313m) threatens the final push towards the global eradication of poliomyelitis, a coalition of international organisations and charities has claimed.

Under the global polio eradication initiative, numbers of cases of polio continue to fall and are now at an all time low. Last year there were just 537 new

cases, down from 2979 in 2000. The number of countries where polio is endemic also fell from 20 in 2000 to 10 last year.

The initiative began through the fundraising work of Rotary International in 1988 and is now spearheaded by the World Health Organization, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and Unicef. However, despite continued donations, including a recent \$150m by the UK government, a shortfall of \$275m threatens completion of the programme.

In addition to the funding gap, the initiative faces the problem of political unrest and warfare in areas where transmission is highest

Alex Vass *BMJ*

## GMC decides not to proceed with case against Craft

The General Medical Council has decided not to proceed with its case against Professor Ian Craft, director of the London Fertility Centre and one of Britain's most well known infertility specialists.

Professor Craft faced charges of serious professional misconduct for allegedly botching a patient's treatment and flouting treatment guidelines. He was due to appear before the council's professional conduct committee in March, accused of ignoring medical guidelines in treating a woman in her 40s and mistakenly implanting gametes in a faulty fallopian tube (*BMJ* 2001;323:826).

A statement issued by the GMC last week said: "Following further investigation and expert opinion, the GMC has decided not to proceed with this case."

Professor Craft said: "I am delighted that the GMC has decided that there is no case to answer. This whole incident has caused unnecessary stress to patients of the London Fertility Centre, both past and present, and to my colleagues and myself. The London Fertility Centre has always adhered to the highest professional standards, focusing as it has on trying to help desperate couples fulfil their desire to have a family."

Annabel Ferriman *BMJ*